THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K.ANTONY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There have been incidents of firing on Indian fishing boats in Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar area and recently slight increase in such incidents has been noticed.

(c) To protect the Indian fishermen, surveillance and patrolling are regularly done by the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard in the Indian waters of the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar. Air surveillance is also undertaken. The surveillance mechanisms include coastal patrol, international maritime boundary patrol, air patrol, shallow water patrol and radar surveillance. Further, the Government of India has strongly taken up the issue of firing on Indian fishermen with the Government of Sri Lanka. The need to act with restraint and to treat India's fishermen in a human manner has been repeatedly emphasized to the Government of Sri Lanka.

(d) During the period from 1991 to mid April 2007, 77 fishermen of Tamil Nadu have been killed in such incidents.

(e) Government of Tamil Nadu provides immediate relief to the family of such deceased fishermen according to its norms. In addition, if the deceased belonged to the Fishermen Cooperative Society, his family is also provided financial relief under the Fishermen Accident Group Insurance Scheme operated by the Department of Fisheries through the National Federation of Fishermen Cooperative Ltd.

Funds for development of BrahMos Missile

†3698. SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the funds provided by Government for development of BrahMos Missile and its future variant;

(b) whether any decision has been taken for bringing further improvement in its future variant and for increasing its hitting capacity; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) The Joint Venture BrahMos was established through Inter-Government Agreement

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

in February, 1998 for design, development, production and marketing of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile with share capital of $250 Million, contributed by India and Russia in the ratio of 50.5% and 49.5%, respectively. The share capital was enhanced by $50 million to include the development of aircraft version of the missile. Therefore, the contribution from the Indian side was Rs. 634 crores. DRDO also contributed Rs. 370 crores to realize the required infrastructure, technologies, production facilities and systems for Indian Armed Forces.

(b) and (c) Performance improvement of the missile system is an ongoing process and suitable actions have been initiated.

Manufacture of MBT Arjun

†3699. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) when the indigenously made Main Battle Tank scheme for the Army commenced and the amount incurred so far on it;

(b) when the approval for systematic manufacture of the Main Battle Tank Arjun was accorded and its outcome;

(c) whether the pace of its manufacturing is slow in the name of technical shortcomings; if so, by when these would be removed;

(d) whether Government would take cooperation of private sector in this scheme as a joint venture; and

(e) the plan to meet the military requirements till commissioning of Arjun tanks in the Army?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) The production of Main Battle Tank Arjun has commenced at Heavy Vehicle Factory (HVF)—Avadi, Chennai. Army has placed an indent for manufacture of 124 Tanks at a cost of Rs. 1760 crore. As on 31 st March 2007, HVF has made an expenditure of Rs. 1270.82 crore against this indent.

(b) An indent for manufacture of 124 Tanks has been placed on Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in March 2000. Five Tanks have already been handed

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.